



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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MEDICAL EXAMINER OFFICE EARNS TOP ACCREDITATION *San Diego County One of Only Three California Jurisdictions Recognized*

The County of San Diego Medical Examiner Office recently earned a prestigious accreditation, reaffirming its place as one of the best-run medical examiner/coroner offices in the nation.

Only 41 jurisdictions in the United States – serving 25 percent of the U.S. population – have medical examiner/coroner offices accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners. NAME is a national organization for professionals, including medical examiners and medical death investigators, who make medical determinations used in legal proceedings. San Francisco and Los Angeles counties are the only others in California with this level of accreditation.

Earning this five-year accreditation didn't entail drastic changes for the County—much of what was required was already in process. The department received a full accreditation in June 1998, but NAME continuously raises the bar on the level of performance required. Preparing for the inspections provided the ME's office with a blueprint of standards to benchmark itself against.

"This renewal of our accreditation for a second full five-year period means that our office has been evaluated by the nation's premier organization that certifies medical examiner /coroner offices and that that we meet or exceed the standards to do a credible job," said Dr. Brian Blackbourne. "For the people of San Diego County, this means that they can rely on us to make an accurate determination of the cause of death in cases falling under our jurisdiction that, by definition, include the most difficult deaths to assess such as all homicides within the County."

Another benefit to San Diego County is that a NAME accreditation boosts the office's ability to attract top professionals. With only about 30 new forensic pathologists entering the field each year within the U.S., the competition to attract and retain experts is fierce. This edge has already proved valuable, as it was one of the factors that interested the incoming medical examiner, Dr. Glenn Wagner, who was just named as the replacement for the retiring Dr. Blackbourne.

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